

**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN D. DINGELL,
RANKING DEMOCRAT, HOUSE COMMERCE COMMITTEE AND
CONGRESSMAN HENRY A. WAXMAN, RANKING DEMOCRAT,
HOUSE GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE**

ORGAN TRANSPLANT REGULATIONS

March 26, 1998

We join in commending the Department of Health and Human Services for its action today to improve the Organ Procurement and Transplant Network. This action is consistent with the goal of the National Organ Transplant Act (NOTA) to create a national system of human organ distribution that is both equitable and adequate.

It is important to note that the regulation itself does not set out the criteria and policies needed to improve the nation's organ distribution system. It takes the reasonable and measured approach of allowing those with expertise in the matter to finalize the details.

The current system does not adequately consider the severity of illness. New criteria should assure that those with the greatest medical need are served first. The regulation will also lead to patient listing criteria and medical emergency categories. The development of allocation policies will also be considered in order to address the current wide disparity in waiting times in various regions of the country. Finally, patient choice will be aided by monitoring the quality of care at transplant centers.

These issues are difficult and often emotional. Our responsibility as public officials is to define and resolve such matters, not avoid them. Congress did its job in enacting NOTA, and HHS is now following up with today's regulation. This is not the last word on organ policy, but it is an important step along the way. We commend Secretary Shalala for her skill and courage in this matter and we look forward to working with her and her dedicated colleagues in the department.